

DOCKET NO.: MSFT-0178 (150708.1)
Application No.: 09/607,170
Office Action Dated: December 23, 2003

PATENT
REPLY FILED UNDER EXPEDITED
PROCEDURE PURSUANT TO
37 CFR § 1.116

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1 through 20 are pending in this application. Claims 1 through 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent Publication 2002/0038357 A1 (Haverstock et al.). Claim 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Haverstock et al. in view of U.S. Patent 5,555,375 (Sudama). Applicants' undersigned representative respectfully requests reconsideration of the rejections in light of the following remarks.

Prior Art Rejections

Applicants' have noted

[a] particularly important operation in workflow systems is managing access to documents as they move through various stages of a workflow. In a typical document-publishing scenario, significant time can elapse between creation of a document and final approval of the document for external viewing or publishing. For example, after an author revises an existing document and enters the revised document into a publishing workflow, several editors may need to review the document prior to the document receiving final approval for viewing by people outside the publishing group. It may take an extended period before the editors have an opportunity to review the document. In the meantime, it is necessary to restrict access to the revised document until it receives final approval. Indeed, it is necessary to restrict access to the document even if the editing process takes only short time. **Editors should be given access to the new version of the document for purposes of editing and approving the document while those without approval authority should be given access to the original version of the document without revisions.** Thus, it can be said that the original or "base" document and the revised document should be maintained separately, or "isolated" from each other and access given as appropriate to one or the other during the period that the document is undergoing approval in the publishing workflow.

Applicants' have disclosed systems and methods to provide such functionality. According to an aspect of the disclosed systems and methods,

when a revision is made to an original or "base" document and the revision placed in a workflow, a separate "working" copy of the base document is generated. As the document moves through the workflow, new versions of the "working" copy document may also be generated. Security controls, which define who may access the base document as well as any versions of the working copy document, are defined and stored in relation to the documents. The security controls further define the types of actions users may take with respect to the document. For example, the security controls may specify that a user should be given access to the working copy document as opposed to the base document and should have the capability to check-out the working copy of the document for revision.

Accordingly, Applicants' claim 1 is directed to a computer-implemented method for controlling access to documents during a workflow, comprising:

upon entry of a base document into a workflow,
creating a working copy of the base document;
selectively providing a user access to either the base document or the working copy of the base document
depending upon the identity of a user; and
selectively providing access to perform operations on the working copy of the base document depending upon the identity of a user.

In order for a reference to anticipate claim 1, the reference must teach all of the claimed elements, including **creating a working copy of the base document upon entry of a base document into a workflow, and selectively providing a user access to either the base document or the working copy of the base document depending upon the identity of a user.** Applicants' undersigned representative respectfully suggests that the Haverstock et al. neither teach nor even suggest the emphasized claim elements.

Claim 13 is directed to a system for providing document isolation in a workflow environment comprising:

a processor, wherein said processor is operable to execute instructions for performing the following acts:
maintaining for a base document undergoing a publishing workflow, a copy of the base document;

maintaining access control data in relation to the base document and the copy of the base document; and
upon receipt of a request to access the base document, selectively determining based on the access control data to provide access to either the base document or the copy of the base document.

In order for a reference to anticipate claim 13, the reference must teach each of the claimed elements, including **maintaining a copy of a base document undergoing a publishing workflow, and upon receipt of a request to access the base document, selectively determining based on the access control data to provide access to either the base document or the copy of the base document.** Applicants' undersigned representative respectfully suggests that Haverstock et al. does not teach or even suggest the emphasized claim elements.

Haverstock et al. allege to disclose a system for enabling access to non-HTML files from a Web browser. (Abstract). When a system user requests a non-HTML file from a database using a Web browser, the Web browser transmits the request to a server via an HTTP server and module. (Abstract). The server locates the requested document, retrieves it, and translates the document into a format supported by the Web browser. (Abstract). The translated document is then communicated to the Web browser. (Abstract). Haverstock et al. further disclose restricting access to fields and employs the concept of roles in doing so. (§§ 57, 65.) For example, a user with the "depositor" role can write to a database. (paragraph 68.) A user with the "reader" role has read-only access to pages on the Web site. (paragraph 69.) An "author" can create and post new pages to the Web site. (paragraph 70.)

Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, however, Haverstock et al. do not disclose or even suggest **creating a copy of a base document upon creation of a workflow, and selectively providing a user access to either the base document or the copy of the base document depending upon the identity of the user.** Rather, in the system disclosed by Haverstock et al., a user is always given access to one document – the document that has been translated for distribution by the Web browser. (Abstract.) Haverstock et al. do not disclose or even suggest that a user selectively be given access to *either the base document or a copy of the base document depending on the identity of the user*, as required by the claims. While Haverstock

et al. disclose using “roles” to control access to data, they do not teach or in any way suggest selectively providing a user access to either the base document or the copy of the base document depending upon the identity of the user. Indeed, the Examiner’s remarks in his “Response to Arguments” that Haverstock et al teach “selectively providing a user access to the working copy of the [sic] based document depending upon the identity of the user” misses the point – the claims require selectively providing a user access to either the base document or the working copy of the base document depending upon the identity of a user. Haverstock et al. do not teach or suggest this claim limitation. Accordingly, Applicants’ undersigned representative respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn. If the Examiner maintains the rejection, Applicants’ undersigned representative respectfully requests that in order to facilitate examination of the claims, the Examiner not only identify paragraph numbers, but quote the specific language in the reference that is alleged to teach each element of each claim.

Claim 20 Is Non-Obvious

Claim 20 is directed to

[a] method of updating access controls to reflect the addition of a new operation that may be performed on a copy of a base document, in a system wherein access to operations to be performed on a copy of the base document are controlled using an access control list which identifies the operations that may be performed and the roles that a user must have to access those operations, comprising:

assigning a unique identifier to the new operation that may be performed on a copy of a base document;
updating the access control list to include an entry for the unique identifier for the new operation; and
updating the access control list to include an entry identifying the roles that have access to the new operation.

In order for a reference or set of references to render claim 20 obvious, the references must teach all of the elements and must also teach combining the elements in the claimed combination. Applicants’ undersigned representative respectfully suggests that the cited references do not even teach all of the claim limitations, and therefore can not possibly suggest combining the

limitations as required by claim 20. Accordingly, it is not possible that the cited references render claim 20 obvious.

The Examiner admits that Haverstock et al. entirely fail to teach assigning a unique identifier to the new operation that may be performed on a copy of a base document, updating the access control list to include an entry for the unique identifier corresponding to the new operation, and updating the access control list to include an entry identifying the roles that have access to the new operation. (Office Action, ¶¶ 23-24.) However, the Examiner alleges that Sudama either teaches or renders these claim elements obvious. Applicants' undersigned representative respectfully disagrees.

Sudama alleges to disclose a method and apparatus for administering an operation specified for performance on a set of independently managed hosts. (Abstract.) The operation is transferred to a management server designated by the system to administer the operation specified on the group object. The designated management server thereafter decomposes the group object into constituent objects which may be host objects or additional group objects. (Abstract.) The decomposition continues until all group objects are decomposed into host objects, and the host objects are executed on various servers. After executing the operations, the host objects and group objects return status information back to the designated management server. (Abstract.) Ultimately, the status information is transmitted to the management server that initially received the operation. (Abstract.)

Sudama further teaches assigning operation identifiers to objects and group objects that are created during the decomposition of the original object. (Col. 8, ll. 55-57.) These identifiers are used to facilitate the return of status information to the parent object. (Col. 8, ll. 61-63.) Thus, Sudama teaches assigning identifiers to sub-operations in order to track the operations and to facilitate return of status information. This is in contrast to claim 20, which specifies **assigning unique identifiers to new operations that may be performed on a copy of base document and updating an access control list to include an entry identifying roles that have access to the new operation.** In truth, Sudama nowhere suggests that unique identifiers be associated with new operations that may be performed **on a copy of a base document**, and

updating an access control list to limit the roles that have access to the operation.

Workflow documents and controlling access to operations performed on those documents is simply not a consideration raised by Sudama. Rather, in Sudama the unique identifiers are generated for an entirely different purpose – to facilitate the return of status information regarding computer processes. Accordingly, the Examiner's assertion that updating the access control list is "essential" to Sudama, is not supported by the text of the reference or by logic.

The Examiner in his "Response to Arguments" admits that several elements of claim 20 are not taught by Sudama, and therefore the Examiner relies upon impermissible hindsight to support the allegation that the claim would have been obvious. Indeed, the Examiner admits that "Haverstock and Sudama did **not** specifically [teach] updating the access control list step to include an entry for the unique identifier for the new operation or to include an entry identifying the roles that have access to the new operation." (Office Action, Para. 28.) Nevertheless, the Examiner alleges "in order to add the new operation and enable the roles to have access to the new operation, it would have been obvious that the access control list must be updated so the authentication to the exiting users is valid with the new operation since the access control list is in correspondence with the operations and user roles." (Id.) Thus, the rejection is based not on the teachings of the reference, but rather upon impermissible hindsight by the Examiner. See MPEP § 2145. In truth, Sudama does not teach the claim elements that the Examiner attributes to it. For this reason alone the rejection must be withdrawn.

Furthermore, in order to establish a prima facie case of obviousness, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. MPEP § 2143. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the reference, and not based on applicant's disclosure. MPEP § 2143 citing *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991). Even if Sudama taught the claimed elements, which the Examiner admits it does not, there is no suggestion in Sudama that its teachings should or could be used in another system,

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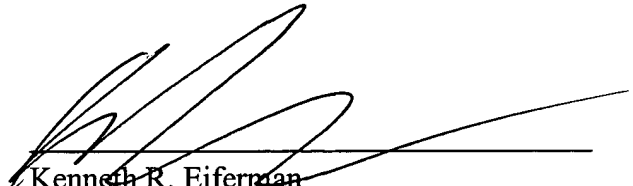
and more particularly one such as taught by Haverstock et al. Indeed, there is no teaching by Sudama that the system it discloses are suitable and useful in other systems such as a workflow control system.

Therefore, because they entirely fail to teach or even suggest the elements of claim 20, Haverstock et al. and Sudama et al can not possibly render claim 20 obvious. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested. Furthermore, if the Examiner maintains the rejection, Applicants' undersigned representative respectfully requests that the Examiner quote the specific language in Sudama that allegedly teach each claim element, and the specific language in Sudama that allegedly suggest combining those claim elements with specific teachings in Haverstock et al. arrive at the combination of claim 20.

CONCLUSION

Applicants' undersigned representative respectfully submits that all of the claims patentably define over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the present Office Action and a Notice of Allowance are respectfully requested.

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